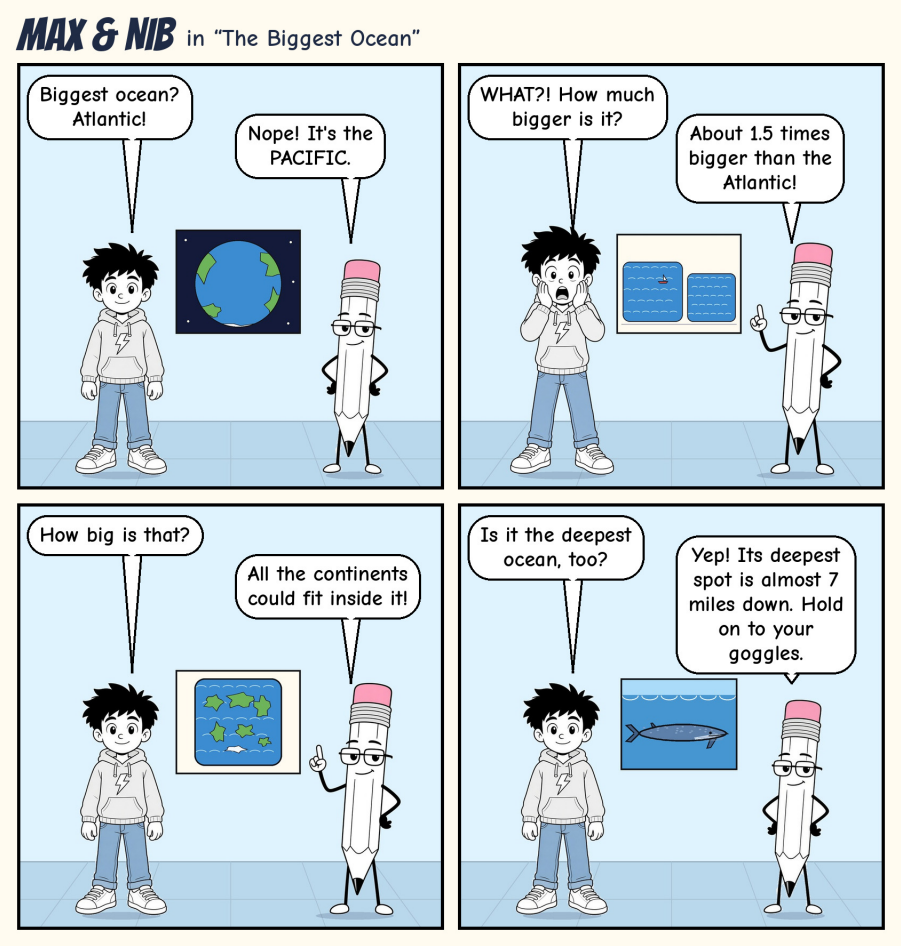


Name: _____ Date: _____

What's the Biggest Ocean in the World?

Earth Science · Grades 3–6 · About 15 minutes · Max & Nib

Cool facts

What is the biggest ocean in the world? It is the Pacific Ocean! NOAA, a U.S. science agency, says the Pacific covers about 63 million square miles. The Atlantic Ocean is the second biggest. It covers about 41 million square miles. That makes the Pacific about 1.5 times bigger than the Atlantic. The Pacific is so big that all of the world's continents could fit inside it! It is also the deepest ocean, almost 7 miles deep at its deepest spot. Different maps draw the edges of the oceans a little differently, so you may see slightly different numbers in different books. But they all agree the Pacific is the biggest!

Questions

1. What is the biggest ocean in the world?

2. Which ocean is the second biggest?

3. Why might two books give slightly different sizes for the same ocean?

4. The Pacific is about 63 million square miles. The Atlantic is about 41 million. How many million square miles bigger is the Pacific?

Show your work

Write about it

Magellan named the Pacific after a word meaning “peaceful.” If you found a brand-new ocean, what would you name it? Why?

Word Record **Ocean basin**: the giant low part of Earth’s surface that holds an ocean’s water.

What's the Biggest Ocean in the World? — Answer Key

Grades 3–6 · For teacher or parent use

Answers

1. What is the biggest ocean in the world?

   The Pacific Ocean.

2. Which ocean is the second biggest?

   The Atlantic Ocean.

3. Why might two books give slightly different sizes for the same ocean?

   Different maps draw the edges (borders) of the oceans a little differently, and the numbers are rounded.

4. The Pacific is about 63 million square miles. The Atlantic is about 41 million. How many million square miles bigger is the Pacific?

   About 22 million square miles bigger (63 − 41 = 22).

Writing prompt: Magellan named the Pacific after a word meaning “peaceful.” If you found a brand-new ocean, what would you name it? Why?
Accept any reasoned answer for the writing prompt. For adults: NOAA’s National Ocean Service gives the Pacific as about 63 million square miles and the Atlantic as about 41,105,000 square miles (106,460,000 km²), so the Pacific is about 1.5 times bigger. Other NOAA pages say about 59–60 million square miles for the Pacific; totals vary with where ocean borders are drawn, so the sheet says “about.” NOAA Ocean Exploration lists the Challenger Deep at about 35,876 feet (10,935 m), almost 7 miles.

Sources

- NOAA National Ocean Service: What is the largest ocean basin on Earth? — https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/biggestocean.html
- NOAA National Ocean Service: How big is the Atlantic Ocean? — https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/atlantic.html
- NOAA Ocean Exploration: How deep is the ocean? — https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/ocean-fact/ocean-depth/

Cool Fact The Pacific is the **oldest** of today’s ocean basins. Its oldest rocks are about **200 million years** old! (NOAA)

Cool Fact The Atlantic Ocean is named after **Atlas**, a giant from Greek myths. (NOAA)